

An extension cord

can be a handy, temporary way to place electrical equipment wherever you'd like it. But if used improperly, extension cords can cause fire and injury – even death.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) staff estimates that each year, about 2,000 injuries associated with electric extension cords are treated in hospital emergency rooms. More than half of the injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions or sprains caused by people tripping over extension cords. Six percent of the injuries involve children less than five years of age.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International reminds you to use extension cords safely – your life may depend on it.

Founded in 1994 through a joint effort between Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is North America's only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety in the home and workplace. ESFI is a 501(c)(3) organization funded by electrical manufacturers and distributors, independent testing laboratories, utilities, safety and consumer groups, and trade and labor associations. ESFI sponsors National Electrical Safety Month each May, and engages in public education campaigns and proactive media relations to help reduce property damage, personal injury and death due to electrical accidents. The Foundation does not engage in code or standard writing or lobbying and does not solicit individuals.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.



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USE EXTENSION CORDS SAFELY!



Using Extension Cords Safely

Use extension cords only when necessary and only on a temporary basis.

Ensure that the extension cord's wattage rating is at least as high as the tool or appliance plugged into it.

If furniture or beds may be pushed against an extension cord where the cord joins the plug, use a special "angle extension cord."



Extension cords can cause tripping hazards. Do not run them across walkways, floors or areas where people walk or equipment is rolled.

When using outdoor tools and appliances, use only extension cords equipped with an inline GFCI and labeled for outdoor use.

Use polarized extension cords with polarized appliances.

Insert plugs fully so that no part of the prongs are exposed when the extension cord is in use.

When disconnecting cords, pull the plug rather than the cord itself.

Replace cracked or worn extension cords with new, properly rated cords that bear the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, safety closures and other safety features.

Don't Be Shocked – Prevent Electrocutation

Use only three-wire (grounded) extension cords for appliances with three-prong plugs.

Never remove the third (round or U-shaped) prong, which is a safety feature designed to reduce the risk of shock and electrocution.

Electricity and water don't mix: if using an extension cord in a kitchen, bathroom, outdoors or in a potentially damp location, plug it only into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet.

Be Fire-Safe

Don't overload extension cords by plugging in appliances that draw a total of more watts than the rating of the cord.

Never run an extension cord under a rug or carpet – heat buildup and friction could cause a fire.

Exposed wires can cause fires: check your extension cords frequently for signs of wear, and discard any that have breaks, tears or fraying.

If a cord feels hot and/or there is a softening of the plastic, it could mean the cord is overloaded or that wires or connections are failing. Discard the cord and replace it.

Keep extension cords in prime condition

Store cords properly to keep from damaging or breaking the wires – do not bend sharply or twist.

Never place an extension cord where it is likely to be damaged by heavy furniture or foot traffic.

Never run extension cords through doorways where they may be pinched by a closing door.

Make sure cords do not dangle from the counter or table tops where they can be pulled down or tripped over.

Never use an extension cord while it is coiled or looped.

Never cover any part of an extension cord with newspapers, clothing or other objects while the cord is in use.

Don't use staples or nails to attach extension cords to a baseboard or to another surface.

